



# EEOC News

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## **EEOC REPOSITIONING PLAN GOES INTO EFFECT** *Seattle Field Office Area to Benefit from Streamlined Agency*

SEATTLE –The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) announces a nationwide plan to reposition the agency's field structure. The plan's aims are to enhance the agency's enforcement presence, improve customer service and public access, and increase efficiency, and the Seattle Field Office area will benefit from the realignment.

Under the new arrangement, the Seattle Field Office will report to the San Francisco District Office Director Joan Ehrlich effective January 1, 2006. The Seattle Field Office will continue to provide services to the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. In addition, the Seattle Field Office will also service the state of Montana.

"The Commission is responding to demographic shifts, changes in population and workload, and service needs," said EEOC San Francisco District Director H. Joan Ehrlich. "This is about making government work better, and cost less. We look forward to reaching out to all segments of our district, and I encourage employers to contact us for training and community groups to partner with us on outreach."

"The goal of the repositioning plan is to allow EEOC to make more effective use of agency resources and talent," said Seattle Field Office Director Jeanette M. Leino. "The Seattle Field Office will continue to provide a full range of services, including investigations, mediation, litigation as well as outreach and training."

Under the national repositioning plan, no jobs will be lost, no offices will close, and two new offices will be opened, in Las Vegas and Mobile, Ala. The plan reduces the number of managers and administrators and increases front-line staff doing investigations, mediations and litigation – delivering a more streamlined and efficient structure with greater customer service and more public accessibility.

"We're pleased, after three years of crafting and consulting on our plan, to move forward with implementation," said EEOC Chair Cari M. Dominguez. "Repositioning will enable the

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EEOC to expand its front-line staff to give the public better, faster service, and to work more efficiently with severe budgets. EEOC is expanding – not reducing – its presence.”

All current EEOC offices will continue to provide a full range of services, and two new offices will open in areas that need more service. More staff will be available for daily interactions with the public. The public will continue to do business as usual with the Commission, calling, visiting and writing offices as they always have, soon with two additional offices. The public may continue to file charges in any convenient EEOC office.

The Commission has been engaged in a comprehensive review of its organizational structure and operations for three years. Chair Dominguez was guided by the President’s requirement that agencies be structured to be customer-centered and results-driven. The Chair also required that any proposal be employee-friendly, so no EEOC office would close and no employee would lose a job, be required to make a geographic move, or be downgraded.

The Commission voted to approve the plan on July 8. For months, going back even before that vote, Chair Dominguez, Chief Operating Officer Leonora Guarraia and other top EEOC officials have met with a host of groups representing the civil rights community, the bar, and labor unions; and with numerous Members of Congress and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, to discuss the plan and field questions. The agency solicited public comments on the proposal, held a public forum June 23 and posted an extensive Q&A on its web site.

The field structure plan is the second of three repositioning efforts to put the Commission in a more viable position to carry out its mission, given shifting demographics, a changing business environment, explosive technological advancements, and budgetary considerations. The first phase involved establishing a National Contact Center (NCC), on a pilot basis. The NCC has been operational for 10 months and has already greatly improved customer service in a variety of ways. The NCC provides immediate access to customer service representatives in 150 languages between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern time. An automated system with answers to frequently asked questions is accessible on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. Calls are monitored for quality assurance and to track demographics, issues and concerns to help shape the center's operations and future EEOC policy. And all calls to the NCC are toll-free.

The third phase will involve a more streamlined Washington headquarters, with well-defined lines of responsibilities and clarification of roles. EEOC’s structure was established in 1979 at a time when EEOC had approximately 3,800 employees. With the attrition of staff in the 1980s and 1990s, EEOC today has some 2,400 employees.

The EEOC enforces the nation's laws in the private and federal sectors prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age and disability. These statutes include Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, sections of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Further information about the Commission is available online at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).